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ating with the National Municipal League in drafting the library section of a proposed model city charter. All of the above are vitally interested in legislation for the support of public libraries. May we hope that through their united efforts, not hastily but after much travail, there may be drawn up a statement of underlying prin-

ciples of library legislation to which this Association may give its approval, and which may serve as a guide to city councils and commissions and state legislatures? If so, one step will have been taken toward securing continuous adequate support for libraries and minimizing the evils of municipal retrenchment.

THE LARGER PUBLICITY OF THE LIBRARY

BY JOSEPH L. WHEELER, *Librarian, Youngstown Public Library*

At this late date, when librarianship has been an organized profession for forty years, we are making a small beginning in what always has been and always will be an important part of our work. If the goal of the library is to get as many good books read as possible; if the function of the librarian is to get two books read where only one was read before; then library publicity is an ordinary, legitimate activity, calling for our best interest and effort. For, no matter how good his service, the librarian can never hope to reach the mass of the people without advertising his wares.

That this is true, proof may be found in some of our well thumbed pages of library statistics, which show that even in those cities where the libraries are working for larger use of books, less than a fifth of the people are enrolled as library users. We have only begun to do library work, after these forty years. If we omit all of the population which is unable to read in any language, which is too young, too ill, too handicapped by distance and circumstance, to use the libraries in our cities and towns, can we prove to anyone that we have made much progress in our dealings with the remaining large part of the population?

The time may come when the technique of getting books read will be taught in library schools, along with instruction in marking numbers on their backs. One may arise among us and teach us the psychology of our profession, the appeal of colored book-covers, the lure of the book-line that

reaches out to the sidewalk, the cause and cure of the craving for "something new," the origin of dull seasons and rush hours, the mind of him who comes for a light novel and takes away a biography of power and inspiration. Publicity is nothing more than the study of human nature, followed by a carefully planned appeal to it. A man in any other work or business would tell us that if we librarians hope to achieve a greater use of books, we should make more study of human nature, and more appeal to it.

A feeling still lingers in some corners that library publicity is a fad, a side-issue, a running after newspaper glory and large figures of circulation. It is true that we still are so elated over the publication of a booklist, circular, or news story, that our delight must often appear elementary even to our fellow workers. But it is not true that library publicity aims at size rather than quality of circulation, or that circulation of books is a less worthy object than their use in the library building. Why not assume that publicity can increase both quality and quantity of reading, that it can make steady book users out of persons who have previously used books but little, that it can be directed to building up reference work itself?

One thinks first of the publicity which works directly for a larger use of books. Even more important, in some respects, and in the long run, is the publicity which works for a larger public understanding of the library itself, and what it is trying to

do. In all too many instances librarians are reminded of this public understanding and support only when the city council is voting on the annual appropriation. Why is it that in a great many cities and towns, the playgrounds, the public schools, the social centers, the Christian associations, and all the rest of the agencies for social advance, receive so much more attention than the library? Why is it that the state experiment stations can send out a column of news that describes the county adviser as a distributor of agricultural literature, and have the column appear in every newspaper in the state, when a news story on the same topic, if sent out by librarians, is almost sure to be ignored by the editors. The answer is that though we ourselves take our work with tremendous seriousness, we have not yet made much of a dent in public opinion.

It is only natural that in a community where the library has followed a quiet course of handing out volumes to those who ask for them, distributing well-made booklists from the desk, trying to operate the library economically and according to the rules of Hoyle, we should become almost oblivious to the great question: What is our real standing in the community, as a vital factor in the life of every citizen? It is easy to delude oneself into thinking that the small number who use the library are typical of the whole population. It is hard to realize that even among the crowds who are already borrowing library books, few know anything of the purpose, the plans and the methods of the work for which they themselves are paying. The library plays such a small part in the public mind, as compared with schools, for instance, that to the nine out of ten, education and school are completely synonymous terms. Chambers of commerce, women's clubs, and improvement societies gather to discuss and argue about the Gary system, vocational schools, the platoon plan. Librarians probably hope that the time will never come when the public will assemble to discuss the proper aims, methods and finances of library work. Per-

haps it would be better for us if they did. Perhaps, in our well-meaning efforts to do just the right thing for our "dear public," we have built a fence around our profession, and have left our public too much on the outside.

To come down to facts instead of speculations, the public must know more about the library and the librarians, as well as about the books, if we are to gain a place in the sun. Conversely, unless the librarian himself has the outward vision, unless he studies and loves the crowd, and has his finger on the pulse of his community, he will find it slow work to build up enthusiasm, interest and support for his institution. The personal element plays a large part in library work, all the way up and down the staff. But nowhere is it so important as in the attitude which the librarian has toward one hundred per cent of his fellow citizens. People do not have to come to the library; they do not have to read books. There is no legal, social or moral obligation to use the library. We must use suggestion, attraction, enthusiasm and satisfaction, if we are to lead an ever growing stream of people to the open book, and secure for our libraries the increasing support to which they are entitled.

What then, more definitely, are some of the things which the librarian may do in this direction? Beginning close at home he can undertake to make each of his trustees into an active and zealous missionary. It is no easy matter. It is the librarian's self-punishment, that his willing, interested and conscientious trustee too often reflects the lukewarm attitude of the public. Rather should trustees act as bearers of the great truth that the library is vital to the community. Nothing can reveal to the librarian with such dismaying clearness his own neglect of this opportunity, as to have his trustees, perhaps at the threshold of some new development, assume that the library is doing well enough, that the public will not pass a bond issue, will not increase the millage, or that the city officials will not grant a larger appropriation, when current library practice

points forward. With their standing in the community, the confident and outspoken leadership that trustees could take before the public, would be a new and priceless asset to most librarians. It is well to have the librarian given the responsibility for running the library. But we have made another great step toward an ideal situation, when we know that each trustee is an active co-worker in some of these larger problems.

For the good of the library we have duties to our trustees other than making a weekly or monthly report. We must inform and inspire them, that they in turn may help us teach the public what the library means. We can keep them abreast with current library practice. We may inflict an occasional library magazine article on them. Bring them to the library between meetings, and visit them in their offices, not to bother them with troubles, but to tell them of constructive hopes, plans and problems, and to have them share the pleasure of directing the work, and realizing what it means in the community.

One would hardly need to add, if it were not so often overlooked, that the staff members are likewise indispensable helpers in winning public opinion. A recent article in a library magazine gives the warning that staff members should not have their first knowledge of the librarian's policies from news articles or from readers. Beside the embarrassment of the assistants in having what they regard as their business told them from outside, the public cannot escape the thought that the librarian is not closely enough in touch with his own family of workers.

There are conditions and developments of a general enough nature to allow the librarian to take his staff into his confidence, to some extent, especially in the smaller libraries. While it is difficult to know just how far to go, and one must be sure of himself, it is probably true that nearly every librarian could benefit by a larger discussion of general library problems with his staff.

Such an attitude would surely be reflected in the attitude of the staff toward the public, and in turn in the attitude of the public toward the library. The business man, especially, knows the value of team work in store or factory, and respects it in the library. Business men would take more interest in the library if they were shown how library operation follows many of the methods of business itself. To mention a few, there are: buying, turnover of the stock, advertising, organization, operating costs, scientific layout of the working space, and good-will. This is a good outline of topics on which to base a talk before business organizations. A librarian ought to take advantage of every possible opportunity to appear before groups of business men, not only to encourage them to a larger personal use of the library, but even more to let this large class of citizens know something about the library's purpose.

In attempting to reach the business men, and indeed, in trying to uproot the whole of the old-fashioned idea that a library is merely a storehouse for novels and cultural books, we often have the appearance of going to the other extreme and emphasizing far too strongly the mere dollar value of library books. But is it not true, after all, that this emphasis is more apparent than real? It would be hard to find a library, which in developing its work with artisans, engineers, business men, has really neglected or even slackened its efforts to make the library what it always must be, a center and source of culture.

The emphasis on the dollar is natural and necessary. Though it may have been especially noticeable of late, it is doubtful if it will be abated. We cannot change human nature to meet our little ideas of what books people should read. Nor is there anything about our work which we can tell with such force, as the stories of men and women who find library books of some use in earning their daily bread, and in solving the merely physical, commercial problems that are to be found in every city and town. It does no good to

stand proudly aloof from the crowd, whispering about culture and the classics. It does do good to meet the crowd on the basis of its work-a-day interests, and to have enough understanding and sympathy with its point of view, to be able to say in an effective way, "Here, too, are books for you. Books that will refresh and inspire, though they may not make your pay check larger." We take pride in knowing the single reader and his tastes. But we are on the right road when we try to know the taste and feeling of the great hundred per cent.

Therefore we must forever emphasize the mere commercial value of our work, in keeping the library in the public mind. It is because the public mind cares most for this presentation. There are three publicity methods which seem especially successful, and which have as one of their central motives this work-a-day value of books. The first of these has just had its best example in the Library Week that was carried out this spring by the joint efforts of the Toledo Public Library and Chamber of Commerce. We all know that in any town or city, the mass of people has practically no understanding of the library. It is reasonable to say that now, in Toledo, there is practically no one who has not at least heard of the library. The whole town was aroused and interested in the library. The business men were not only interested, but they did much of the actual planning and work. The Chamber of Commerce stood shoulder to shoulder with the library. Not that the library needed moral support, but that Business felt its personal connection with the realm of books. This campaign consisted of a whole week of widespread and active publicity of all kinds. There were circulars, posters, booklists, window displays, a proclamation by the mayor, public meetings and speeches about books and the library. There were signs on the street cars, even. What librarian with the outward vision, can help wishing to follow so notable an example?

Yet it is possible that there are still a few who murmur to themselves, "This is

not the library work of my grandfather's day." Even these would be inclined to approve of the second method that seems worth mention. This is the public exhibition of diagrams, charts and other material which shows what the library does with books and money. The purpose of such exhibits is not the larger use of books, except as an indirect result, but to tell the story that will bring greater interest and support for the library itself. Something is needed for the guidance of librarians in the preparation of such exhibits, and it is probable that the Publicity Committee of the Association will undertake something of this sort. At least the smaller cities, and many of the larger ones, could well use a traveling exhibit, as the nucleus for their local effort. The things which work most for success will be: choosing the few forcible facts and presenting them forcibly; the use of few and brief legends; the use of bold and clear-cut lettering, which should be done by an expert; the placing of the exhibit where it will be seen by the greatest number. Even the most conservative librarian could feel that exhibits of this sort were appropriate and useful, and they could be carried out in every community.

The third method is one which has been used in many cities, with marked success. This is the display of library books in store windows, to increase the use of books. By making a change in the display, the emphasis can be thrown onto the library and its work, as well as on the appeal of the books themselves. This means the use of placards and small diagrams which tell the important things about the library: How it is supported, how it spends its money, how it is used, increases in use, decreases in operating costs. In preparing window exhibits take advantage of the help that the advertising men and window-trimmers can give. In one city, at least, this coöperation went to the length of preparing a scene from a reader's home, with father and mother reading in their arm-chairs, while in the foreground a little girl lay at full length, reading "Alice in Wonderland."

In this instance the library's exhibit occupied an entire window in a large department store, and during the same week ten other windows, equally valuable, were given to the library by other merchants. The money value of such coöperation meant the loss of hundreds of dollars to the stores, and simply shows that though they would never grant such a privilege to anyone else, they regard the library as on a different basis from other organizations, and are glad to help it.

This is not the best time to discuss the details of actual publicity. The point is, that we have lying at our hands many means for showing the public something of our plans, methods and purposes, and this education of the public is worth the time and trouble which it takes.

All of our plans, hopes, labor, for adequate appropriations come to their climax when the town or city council takes its vote on the annual budget. The fortunes of the average town or city library are practically dependent on a very few men, and most of all on the finance committee of the council. Librarians can well depart from the usual American custom of electing men to the City Hall, and then charging them, in a vague and careless way, with being dishonest, small minded and incompetent. The men who make the city appropriations are perhaps as honest and conscientious as we could desire, if we only took the trouble to find out. The librarian is only one of the swarm of busy bees who sing loudly in the councilman's ears at budget time, and if he pays more attention to the ones who sing loudest, who shall blame him?

The librarian's hum is not very loud, sad to say, and his singing seldom arouses any loud echoes from the public, we must admit, still more sadly. When we make library service mean as much to the public as schools do now, we may expect the same outspoken demands for more support, and complaints at any cuts in the budget.

Be actually acquainted with councilmen, or supervisors, or selectmen, or whatever their titles are. Know the city hall and

its workers and their work. They will doubtless be as much interested in you and your work as you are in them, and not any more so. The librarian's temptation is to look on all the office holders as politicians, in the unhappy sense of the word, and to forget that he too must be a politician, but in the good sense of the word.

We need to go to council meeting, once or twice a year, to find out how little a part the library plays in the grist of motions for street openings, paving, more police protection, tax payer's complaints, and all the rest. Interest the President of the council, and ask him for ten or fifteen minutes out of some session, so that you can give the members a bird's-eye view of the library system, what it means, how you buy books, how a budget is divided, how the accounts and bills are handled, how your library ranks with others in various respects. If you have any forcible figures or comparisons, perhaps they can be made into a large diagram that can be shown. One showing the population growth, and the increase in library support as compared with the growth of circulation, could be used to advantage in a great many cities. These men are busy, they are not predisposed to give their time, but on the other hand they will give close attention and be much interested and impressed by a short, plain talk, that touches the main points.

Over and over, councilmen have been invited to visit libraries. It would be interesting to count noses and find out how many councilmen have ever been inside the libraries to which they apportion money. In one city, several invitations having had no effect, the library board descended upon the council chamber and brought the members to the building in their automobiles. Surprise at the amount of patronage was followed by deep interest in the methods of handling the work and helping readers in different departments. Still the wonder grew, as these men watched the steady stream of borrowers, that the library was doing so great and useful a work, and that

library books are not all novels, by any means.

The librarian can maintain a mutually helpful acquaintance with many city officials and show them forcibly the value of the library if he makes a point of seeing that the library service connects directly with the problems, at least the occasional more important problems, which come before the council and its committees. The larger library is able to do this much more successfully than the small. But the small library can often select a topic which is sure to interest the public very widely and deeply, and endeavor to make the books, pamphlets, and reports of some actual assistance.

The campaign with mayor and council and city officers is not a temporary or sporadic thing, therefore. It ought to be based on a continuous acquaintance with the men in authority, and find its expression in ever-renewed efforts to show them the relative importance of the library in a well organized community.

Last of all, and very briefly, what about the librarian himself?

We have heard that the librarian should spend fifty per cent of his time inside of his building and fifty per cent outside. Certainly every library worker feels the everlasting necessity of more books, the acquaintance with the inside of books, better service, attention to a host of details, and all the rest. It is in the worthy desire to perfect service that he forgets the people outside. Out of each day, or from his week, he should hold inviolate a few minutes, an hour or two, in which he can forget details and project his mind into

the community mind, get his ear to the heart of the crowd.

After all, the librarian is the library's greatest advertiser. To join the local historical, literary and scientific societies, has always been held in good repute. Join also the Chamber of Commerce, or the leading civic and business organizations of the city, not with the notion that mere membership produces support for the library, but to take active part in work that helps the people, and thereby show that the librarian is human as well as being a librarian. (Both in and out of libraries this interesting doubt still seems to exist in some localities.) We ought to seek and accept every opportunity to appear personally before clubs, social, business, religious organizations, labor unions, foreign societies, and all other groups. We cannot stifle the personal element out of library work. We cannot even use the newspapers successfully without injecting the personal name, the human interest into them. The value of interviews, the personal touch, is understood well enough by newspaper men and by everyone but librarians, many of whom possess a false modesty that is based on self-consciousness rather than on the good of the library.

There should be no specialists on library publicity. Every librarian must be a publicity man, with his heart in the work of reaching his people. The motive of publicity is the great democratic ideal of librarianship. It is a sound, healthy, helpful motive. It is only a reflection of our chosen motto, under whose inspiration we have all been striving these many years, "The best books for the greatest number."